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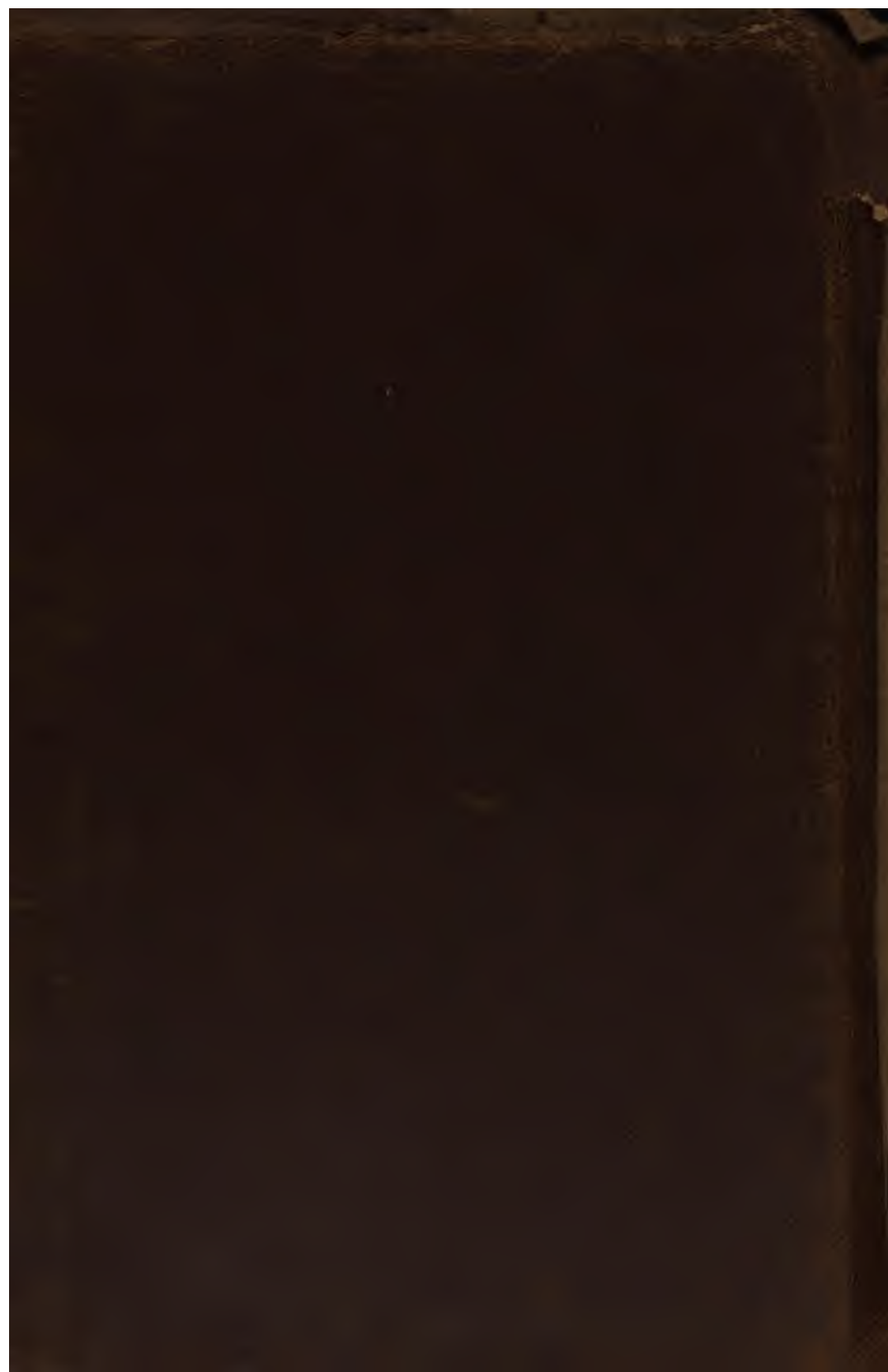
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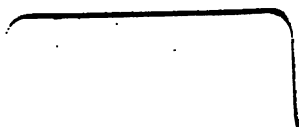
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S. Franklin Drew

Life and Letters
of
Sidney Rankin Drew

Edited by
MRS. SIDNEY DREW

1921
THE CHELTENHAM PRESS
New York

PS₃₅₀₇

R₅₇L₅

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LUCILE McVEY DREW**

To An Aviator

*Tell them, O skyborn,
That I died with high romance to wife;
That I went out as I had lived—
Drunk with the joy of life.*

*Yea, say that I went down to death
Serene and unafraid,
Still loving song, but loving life more
Of which song is made.*

HARRY KEMP

In Memoriam
Sidney Rankin Drew

*A gallant spirit, heroic in passing
on to the great adventure,
rendering to his country the
supreme sacrifice.*

New York, N. Y.
Sept. 19, 1891

Montdidier, France
May 19, 1918

Preface

IT was the desire of my husband, the late Sidney Drew, to publish for his son's friends a small volume of his letters written during service in the Lafayette Flying Corps. In accordance with those wishes I have endeavored to put into some semblance of form a story of Sidney Rankin Drew's experiences, ambitions and tribulations.

To his father he told them all. I have never known such camaraderie as existed between these two.

In the intimate personal problems of his every-day life—in the more serious ones which had to do with his ambitions and work, he consulted his father.

The son was an indefatigable but deliberate worker and every story, every play he wrote or every manuscript he adapted for the screen, was created, thrashed out or built anew with his father as his confidant and adviser.

He was brilliant to a degree, inheriting not only the histrionic ability of the Drews but the literary talent of his mother, who was Gladys Rankin, herself an author of distinction and a member of an illustrious stage family, the daughter of McKee Rankin and Kitty Blanchard.

Young Drew wrote a number of short stories and one of the best one-act plays ever produced, called *What the Moon Saw*. He was an excellent actor but had forsaken temporarily both the stage and the screen and for several years previous to his entering the great arena where the game of war was played, he wrote and directed motion pictures, being considered among the foremost few.

Many theatrical and motion picture men—actors—writers—producers, made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War. They left an atmosphere of tinsel, calcium lights, and grease paint for the stern reality and the thundering darkness of the front line in France. They all fought alike and fought well. The first one to go "West" was my husband's son.

Sidney Rankin Drew was the last of his line, almost the last member of the family of illustrious actors who bear that name. He was the first American actor killed in the World War.

Post No. 340 of the American Legion, which represents the affiliated amusement industries, has honored his memory by naming the Post for him. It is for the benefit of the S. Rankin Drew Post that this book is published, as many of young Drew's friends agreed that his letters would make an interesting volume even if compiled on a more pretentious scale than his father had intended.

In the *Life and Letters of Sidney Rankin Drew* you will read the stories of his adventures, his experiences in the army, his general outlook on life and above all you will discern his fine spirit, his splendid patriotism, and his idolatrous love and respect for his father.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Louis Mary Drew", written over a horizontal line.

ONE HUNDRED COPIES OF THIS EDITION HAVE BEEN PRINTED

OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 50

New York, N. Y., April 15, 1921

**LIFE AND LETTERS OF
SIDNEY RANKIN DREW**

By **WILLIAM D. HOWARD**



Sidney Drew
By James Montgomery Flagg

*Today my children came to me—
"Sidney Drew's dead,"
They said.*

*I hope that Sidney Drew can see
Even from far eternity
Beyond these pallid April skies
The tribute of my children's eyes.*

LEONORA SPEYER



Sidney Rankin Drew
By James Montgomery Flagg

Life *and* Letters of Sidney Rankin Drew

The seriousness of the situation in France during those dark days in the early part of 1917 impressed young Drew from the moment he set foot on French soil. His very first letter home was most indicative of that, and of him. He had gone over to drive an ambulance but immediately took steps to get into an even more dangerous branch of service.

Dear Father:—

It is a wonderful thing to talk about war in the United States, and to be impressed with the importance of being earnest, and to step bravely onto a ship, but when you land in Bordeaux and you see troops on permission arriving from the front; when you feel the melancholy determination of millions, when you realize the sacrifice of human limbs as maimed men pass you in almost every street; when you realize the sacrifice of lives by the black dresses of the women; when you see these women working diligently as tramway drivers, street cleaners, news vendors; in the shops; in the markets; taking the place of the men; and over all the spirit of cheerful resignation; France smiling through her tears and turning away from the pathetic past to the prophetic future; then, a sudden understanding of what war really means comes upon you.

Things have changed. We are no longer a neutral nation, we are an ally of France, and yet the number of volunteers for the American Ambulance has increased five and ten fold. Hundreds are pouring into the country on every boat. To do what? To carry the wounded Frenchmen, by whose side they should be fighting, to a place of safety. The whole service now savors of the easiest way out of a dangerous job. This thought is in the back of the mind of

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

France although she does not express it. I know that it was in the back of our minds when we landed in Bordeaux, when we rode up in the train with some young *poilus* returning cheerfully from their homes to the inevitable call of duty and a desperate war.

When we arrived at the American Ambulance headquarters, we were told that there were no ambulances and that we would have to enter the transport service. That is, brave a munition truck called a *camion*. This, I found, had the advantage of being a man's job and also you would not be a non-combatant but a soldier. But, even in the *camion* service you could not consider yourself a fighting man.

Most of the fellows that had come over with the Ambulance Service were young, they were under the conscription age of twenty-one. I thought to myself, "Here I am a man of twenty-five, old enough, strong enough to give my all to my country, my family and my name, come to a service that affords the least possible danger, and, therefore, the least possible respect." It looked as if I had evaded conscription. My self-respect was stunned, my honor was sullied. I was playing at war when I ought to have been really occupied in it.

Their phantoms haunted me. French opinion, my self-respect and the honor of the family. If you were here, dear father, I know that you would have advised me to do the very thing that I decided upon.

I determined to try for the American Escadrille and if that was impossible to accept the transport service as the best I could do. I went to Dr. Gros, handed him my application and passed my physical exam. The next day, I was about to leave with the transport service, believing that it would be several weeks before the application would be passed by the government, when Dr. Gros told me that I could not go off with the transportation because my application was certain of acceptance. I was released

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

from the Ambulance Service and am now waiting in Paris for my government papers which will send me to a flying school.

Of course, heaven knows whether I will succeed as a would-be aviator, but I think so and certainly I am going to try.

Please, I beg you not to worry about me.

I will fight hard for the honor of our country and for you and as you say: "We come from a family that kill."

With my most sincere affection to Mrs. Drew and loads of love to yourself, I am,

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

June 4, 1917.

And so Rankin Drew entered the first Franco-American Flying Corps. A few weeks later he wrote at length of his experiences in camp.

Dear Father:—

I have just received your second cable endorsing my aviation venture and again I was very much heartened by it. It gives me the courage of my convictions to know that you think I did the right thing, and makes me go at my new work with real determination.

Well, I have always wanted to get into the Army and I am in it with a vengeance now. The discipline isn't very severe, but the life smacks distinctly of roughing it. This camp is a very large one, comprising dozens of barracks, thousands of men and hundreds of aeroplanes. There must be fully ninety to a hundred Americans here. That is, men of the Franco-American Flying Corps. First of all the men recruited for the Flying Corps are all enlisted in the Foreign Legion. Therefore, there are all kinds, classes and nationalities in the Flying Corps—Canadians, men of various nationalities from the Foreign Legion (and also

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

various reputations) an Australian or two, and the rest Americans. College men, business men, ex-sailors, mechanicians, and your humble servant.

We are all packed into dormitories like sardines. Our beds are composed of planks supported by wooden horses, and mattresses of straw of very questionable character. For safety it is necessary to lock up all one's belongings, so every time I want something I have to go through a long preamble of unlocking my trunk, delving about in it, and locking it up again. I feel as if I was living in an envelope.

The camp is rather picturesque with its cosmopolitan population of Algerians, Chinese, Russians, Americans and French. The country around is really very pretty and very French, as one would imagine it. The houses are quaint, white walled and red roofed. The camp is tidily dirty and the aeroplanes innumerable, but, in spite of all this "atmosphere" one doesn't seem to be terribly impressed by the "experiences" through which one is passing. The odd costumes, the new customs and the strange tongue, all seem to be incidental to the work on hand, submerged by the absorbing spirit of the war. I suppose that after it is all over I will contemplate my present happenings with curiosity and wonder, but now they pass by me like adventures in a dream.

I am in the best of health, but miss you terribly.

Please give my love and respects to Mrs. Drew and with loads and loads of love to yourself, I am,

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P. S. Thank you, father, again so much for your good wishes and your belief in me.

June 22, 1917.

Sid.

On July 17th Drew wrote:

* * * Well, I have found out that we are permitted to write something of the training here. First of all,

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

there are two schools or courses here. One is called *Caudron* which develops flyers for observation machines, used for the purpose of taking photographs while flying low over the enemy's lines and for directing artillery fire.

Caudron pilots also fly the big bombing machines. This work is terrifically important and very useful, but a brevetted *caudron* pilot, which is the French word for licensed, does not rank as a flyer and as a splendid fellow with the pilot turned out by the *Bleriot* school.

The *Bleriot* school is the training given to men who ultimately drive *Avion de Chasse*, that is fighting planes.

The men who graduate from the *Bleriot* are supposed to be the cream of the flyers, as an *Avion de Chasse* is much the most difficult machine to fly, requiring a most delicate touch and sensational acrobatics to out-manoeuvre the enemy.

If a man is training in the *Bleriot* school and he is found wanting, he is radiated to the *Caudron*. If he fails in the *Caudron* he is radiated to civilian life.

I have essayed to be a *Bleriot* pilot, because it is the best training that one can have. The reason for this is that in *Bleriot* you learn the art of flying by easy stages and you are always alone in the machine, thereby enforcing a spirit of personal confidence.

In *Caudron* you are first put on a double command machine with an instructor always seated behind you to correct your faults, and save his own neck in case one of your mistakes sends the machine too suddenly to earth.

When a man is put alone on a machine after this training, he is naturally nervous and uncertain.

In *Bleriot* there are eight classes or steps in the training, beginning with a machine that cannot leave the ground and does not go over thirty-five miles an hour. The good trick, "if you don't do it" with these machines, is to keep them running in a straight line.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

This sounds very easy but it is quite remarkably hard. However, I have mastered it fairly well by now, and I expect to move up to the next class in a day or two.

"Promotion is rapid in the French Army——"

July 25th we got word that Drew had "moved up."

About this time a new development arose.

There was great likelihood that the United States would take over the Franco-American Flying Corps.

Drew went through the examination which would entitle him to the rank of sergeant in the American Army. The rank of Lieutenant would follow with the award of his pilot license.

The delays and red-tape—the uncertainty of his position annoyed and perplexed him. For months he did not know whether technically speaking he was with the French or the American Army.

In the meanwhile he was advancing rapidly—writing enthusiastically on August 9th of his first experience off the ground.

* * * Well, father, at last I have been in the air. The class I am in now is the first real air class, and it is quite interesting to be up in the air all by yourself.

Of course, you are only up about ten to twenty feet, but it is exciting, for if you break a machine you get the devil and when your accidents reach the number of three, you are thrown out of the school and back to civilian life.

I am hoping and praying that no such horrible thing will happen to me. So far so good, but not very far.

Learning to fly in the Bleriot school at first resembles trying to paddle a canoe straight then trying to ride a bicycle for the first time, and last of all, I should imagine, like trying to drive a light cloud.

It is terrifically interesting work, there's no doubt about that, but my Lord, it is slow.

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

His letter of September 10th reported further progress.

* * * Three days ago I was passed up to the *pique* class. I will explain what the class consists of.

You take a machine up in the air to about sixty feet, fly for about a mile and then nose her over, point her down or *pique*.

After you have descended about forty feet, which you do rather fast, you slowly straighten your machine out until it is parallel with the ground and let her settle slowly to the earth.

It is very probable that I will be in this class a month. There are eight men in it who are ahead of me by priority.

Into the bargain, only one day in every three is a good flying day, so again I shall have to be patient.

I have one chance. The instructor has a custom of riding all the men to see what they can do.

If he likes the work of one of them, he will probably shove him up above the rest.

Once you are in the position of high man, in other words, when you are almost ready to leave *pique* you can usually rest assured that your slow progress is over and that you will be through the *Bleriot* school in a comparatively short while.

I was given four rides this morning (*sorties* in French), but I know they were not very good.

I didn't smash, and that is something, so I am hoping and hoping that the instructor will give me another chance when we work again.

The instructor must have seen his work and liked it, for Drew wrote on September 26th that he had moved up to the first tour-de-piste class, and if there was no wind that night he was almost certain to make his debut. In other words—his first flight.

Dear Santa Claus.
I want a Christmas
tree and the Derrishes
fighting the English
~~the~~ like at Schwartz,
and the English en-
campment with the
soldiers on straw.
the American Infantry
with long coats and
the Rough Riders march-
ing, and the American
sailors in white, and the
box of a American
policemen, and a
sword. Send my love
to the Brownies.
Your little friend,
Sidney Drew



Young Drew began playing at war at an early age



A very serious young man and his dog Tray

My dear Rabbit
I suppose you
are very busy ~~for~~
having so many
children to give eggs
to, if you have one
to spare and it have
been a good boy.
Would you mind giving
me one. hope you
are very well

I am your little
friend.

Lidney Rankin Dear

Dear Santa Claus
On account
of being in New Zealand
I cant ask for a
Christmas tree, and all
the thing that I would
like to have. So I cant
~~thing~~ think of any thing
to ask for, except a
soldiers suit of the
captain of an U.S.
Infantry Reg. We are
in Ashburton Christmas
day I would like you

to choose yourself what
you would like to give
me please, for I think it
~~is going~~ my suit will
be hard to make. I suppose
you have still more
work to do this year;
and you must be very
tired, I hope you are
all very well.

I am your sincere
friend

Sidney Frankin Drew

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

September 27th, 1917.

Dear Father:—

Well at last I can say that I have flown an aeroplane. Last evening I had my first flight and this morning my second.

They are hardly worthy of the name flights and yet one does everything that is required in ordinary flying.

The *tour-de-piste* consists, as I explained yesterday, of following a set course. The course follows the shape of the letter B.

All one has to do is to mount into the air to the height of a hundred and fifty metres, follow the course closely, making your turns at the right angle and, when you come back to your starting point, *pique* and make a good landing.

The length of the course is about two and a half miles, and the time it takes to make it in is ten minutes or thereabouts.

This is the first *tour-de-piste* class. The second and third are the same only the courses are longer and the machines more powerful.

Of course, the height reached in them is greater also.

How soon you get out of these classes depends on your own ability. Some people require only ten *sorties* or tours, others thirty, I mean, in each class.

As I have been a plodding soul, all through the school, I suppose I will require a good many sorties in each class.

I can realize that flying is going to be wonderfully fascinating when I have time to look about me and admire the view.

At the present time I have too much to do piloting the dear little forty-five horse-power machine to be able to appreciate the beauties of nature. . . .

* * * *

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

In a letter to me October 7th Drew wrote more graphically of his flying impressions.

Dear Mrs. Drew:—

As I suppose, you already know by my letters to father, I am at last flying.

Of course it is very inconsequential flying, but nevertheless it is flying.

In my last letter to father I described the first absolute flying class, as I termed it. I am now in the second, in what they call the *cinquante chevaux*.

In this class the engines driven are fifty horse-power instead of forty-five as in the first. I call these absolute flying classes, as one has a chance to behave as though he really knew how to fly an aeroplane.

I am sorry to say that I haven't quite taken advantage of this opportunity as I have been having a good deal of trouble with my landings ever since I got into the fifty class.

If you don't land an aeroplane smoothly, it has a habit of bounding into the air like a bunny, which is most disconcerting to the driver and sometimes disastrous to the machine. So far the work is very interesting.

One gets into the machine, makes himself as comfortable as possible, pulls on the "gaz" and with the assistance of a few slight-of-hand tricks (the point to the trick being that the hand must be as slight as possible) mounts into the air.

One then flutters about, being impressed on the head by the weight of one's helmet, and in the stomach by the tightness of one's belt, while the propeller whizzes about in one's face, causing the eyes to water and the perspective to become ethereal.

One then fiddles about with the controls, twitching nervously and with "slight hands" at them as the wings rise and fall and the whole aeroplane jumps up and down answering obediently to the demands of the air currents.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

Below little yellow patches and large green patches which one had once known as fields and woods, drift innocently by, seeming to have no connection with the air currents that they have helped to ferment into a state of vicious attack. Then one realizes that it is time to turn and, with considerable more twitching at the controls, pushes one of the wings to an angle that seems at least 90 degrees but is probably only two and one half.

The machine whirls around and one has the feeling that one is clinging to a waving flag that is suspended from the eighteenth story window of a sky-scraper.

After one has twitched about in the air for about ten minutes, one becomes fully convinced that he is petrified into a marionette.

At length one sees one's landing ground somewhere below them, and with the first bold motion that one has used, pushes his controls viciously forward, and the machine dives madly down.

At first one is impressed with the sensation of shooting the shoots, but as one sees the ground rushing up to meet him, one instinctively tries to negotiate a gentle landing by again twitching at the controls, this time with a backward motion.

The machine then wavers and flutters and when the ground disappears under your wings you know that you are about to land and wait for the bump. It comes.

Sometimes gently and sometimes, oh! so ungently!

You are then brought back from your petrified state by the immediate necessity of intense concentration on your instructor's half French, half English criticism.

Of course, I suppose that when one is a full-fledged pilot, one will sit calmly in his machine like a splendid fellow while it slips off on a wing, dashes headlong to the ground or tumbles lightly about in the sky, but at the present stage of training one's sense of balance is sternly tested.

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

I enclose two pictures of my impossible self, looking fatter than ever.

I think I am slowly developing a double chin. In one of them I look exactly like a tame lamona.

By the way, the uniform is an ambulance uniform, not aviation, although I am wearing the insignia of an *Eleve* pilot.

You see, as I thought originally that I was going into the Ambulance, I ordered all the necessary costume to be an *ambulancier* and it was too late to countermand the order when I got into aviation.

So far I have abstained from buying an aviation uniform as I still do not know whether I am going to be in the *American or the French Army*.

As usual, I must dash off somewhere.

This time to a French lesson. With loads of love to father, I have the honor to be,

Yours affectionately,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P. S. Please tell Mr. Vest that I am honored by his remembrance of me and give him my most sincere regards.

News of more progress came on October 20th.

* * * I am now in double command *Caudron*. I can hardly realize my good luck.

I was passed from fifty horse-power *tour-de-piste* to sixty *tour-de-piste*, and before I had a ride in the latter class, I was moved up to *Caudron*.

The *Caudron* end of the school consists of three classes: Double command, in which you learn to fly the machine with an instructor in a seat in front of you. Solo, in which you fly without him and do a spiral, serpentine and a couple of other things.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

Then, the brevet class, in which you make an altitude, two short trips to towns only a few miles away, and two long trips called triangles, that take half a day each. When you have accomplished your last triangle you are a brevetted pilot.

It did not take long for Drew to accomplish this: On November 1st he wrote to his father:—

* * * At last, I can tell you that I am on brevet. I have finished my solo flights, my serpentines and spirals. With good weather and a good machine I ought to be brevetted in three days. However, I really don't expect to be. For one thing the weather is terribly uncertain. For another if you have a machine with a poor motor while you are making your *petits voyages* and triangles, you are liable to go *en panne*.

Which means that your motor has given its last kick and you are forced to land in some out-of-the-way place in the country. This causes terrific delay while yards of red tape and hours of time are wasted before you can get your machine started again. However, I am content for the present. It seems extraordinary that I should be as far advanced as I am after these months of monotonous striving.

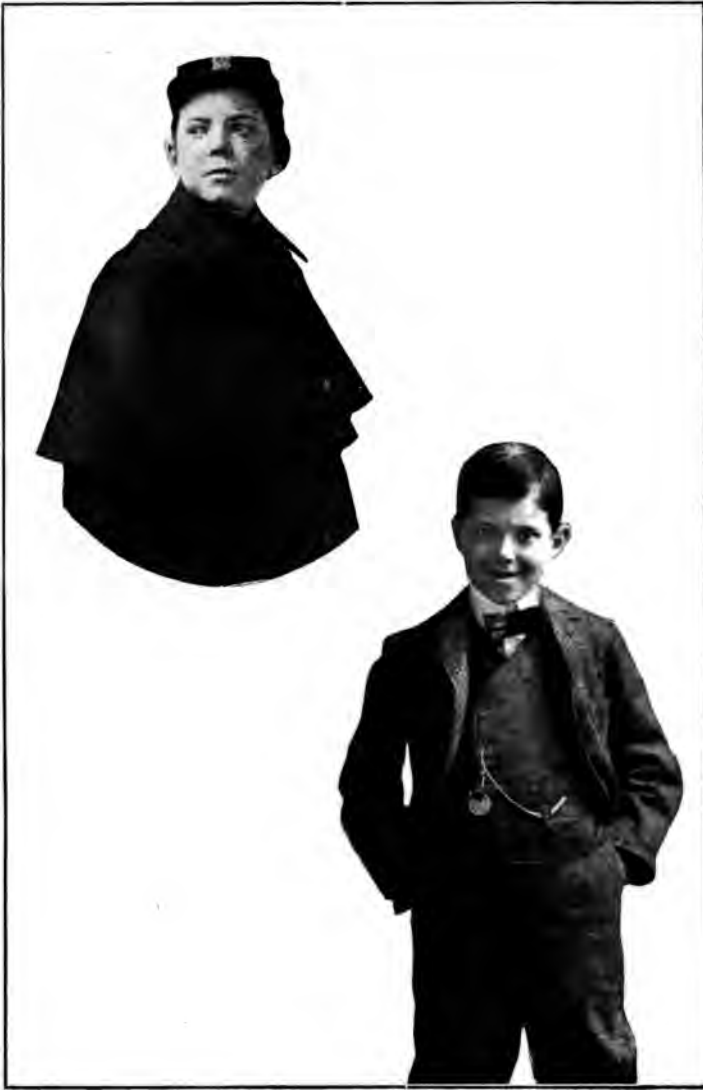
I had begun to fear that I was beginning to vegetate in this place. You know what a *dormant bente* I always was, anyhow and with the slowness of the work here and monotony of the life I was slowly sinking into the state of a "cold fried potato."

Dear father, I am going to say good night as I am terribly tired. Please give my most sincere respects to Mrs. Drew and her sister, and with loads and loads of love to yourself, I am,

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P. S. Please remember me to Anders Randolph if you see him.



A student at Mount Pleasant Military Academy



Drew at 16—his father and "Bet Bouncer"

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

AN ADVENTURE

November 15th.

Dear Father:—

Yesterday morning I started out to make my first *petit voyage* or *ligne droite*, which covers a journey of about 120 kilometers or about seventy-eight miles our way.

That is, from the camp to the destination. To complete the *ligne droite* it is necessary to make a round trip, landing back at the camp.

All one has to do is go in a straight line passing over several towns, make a good landing at the destination marked and return to the Camp.

Well, this I did, once in the morning, and being full of pride and prisms, started to do it again in the afternoon.

I got about seventy kilometers from Camp, had just passed over a small town, and was floating above a large forest when the motor stopped dead.

I was up eighteen hundred feet with nothing but trees and small bare patches of fields below me.

Well, after various circumlocutions, I managed to land without breaking anything, near a small farm. Practically at its front door.

Immediately peasants sprang up from everywhere and watched with open eyes while I discovered that I was a flying Jack Barrymore.

There was no more gasolene in the tank, although I had been most careful to ask the mechanician at the camp if he had filled the tank.

It appears that he had lied sweetly to me in saying "Yes."

Well I went to the town and was taken under the wing of the town constable.

After frantic phonings back to the camp, much tearing of the hair and great kindness shown me by the townspeople (not forgetting the handsomely uniformed

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

constable), a motor bus arrived with gasoline and the next morning I flew on to my destination and then back to the camp.

I immediately started out on my first triangle and reached Chateauroux as I related. Enough said!!

After the five days good weather came at last and we all started out on the second leg of our triangles.

The wind was blowing a small gale and at the end of an hour and three-quarters, I was still seven miles from my landing place at a town called Romorantin.

The journey had been difficult. I had almost lost my way and I was just thanking my lucky stars that it would soon be over when my motor stopped. By George, I was never so mad in my life, but I had to *pique*.

It was a very bad country to land in. Thickly populated and quite hilly.

Eventually I landed *sur les pommes de terre* and found that two spark plugs had gone bad and that there was only about enough gas to fill the carburetor.

Among the gathering crowd of peasants I found a farmer who had a cart and asked him if he would drive me to the nearest town where I could telephone. And, then began more telephoning and more waiting. After two days the mechanics came and I got away to Romorantin and then back to Avord.

If I hadn't been so anxious to finish my brevet trips I should have enjoyed myself immensely.

I lived at the farm which turned out to be a very big one, and it was very interesting.

The family and the farm hands all eat in the kitchen. The family at a small table to one side of the enormous chimney piece, behind which and hidden away in the wall was a huge furnace used for baking purposes; the girl helpers and farm hands who were German prisoners, at a long one on the opposite side.

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

Everyone produced their own clasp knife to cut their meat, which was cooked *a la Childs* before our eyes in large pots over the open fire.

The food was not bad, but the wine was poor and my suggestions of water were met with an astonishment bordering on anxiety. Never have I known such hospitality.

My host and hostess treated me like a lost child and no attention was overlooked to make my stay comfortable and cheerful. Such a thing as money was an insult to them.

After dinner we played cards. A game called *Trente-et-un* which is very much like our game of twenty-one. Then I was shown to a very nice room and slept in a large feather bed heavily canopied.

Since my experience *en panne* I have decided on two things. If you want to see France as you read about it in books with all its charms, hospitality and old-fashioned ideas, take a trip through the country.

After seeing the size and strength of the German prisoners, I do not want to be in the infantry but would rather be up in the air dropping bombs on them. I am now back in Avord waiting to go off on my last triangle.

I received your cable asking me what I should like for Christmas. Dear father, your good wishes, your love and your pride is all that any son can ask from his father, and certainly it is all that I want and makes me more happy than any so-called present. I am going to stop now as I want to write a letter to Mrs. Drew before going to bed.

Father, thank you a thousand, million times for your sweetness and belief and try to explain to Mrs. Drew how much I appreciate her thoughtfulness. God bless you. With loads and loads of love, I am,

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P. S. A large fat pat for Dock-o-dee.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

November 20th, 1917.

Dear, dear Father:—

Just a line to say that yesterday I was actually able to make my last triangle, which means that I have passed my brevet and am now a pilot and corporal in the French Army. The pay is doubled I think, instead of getting eight dollars a month, I now get sixteen.

Following out my determination not to take a permission after my brevet, I started work in Nieuport school to-day.

I got through the first class. That is, double command on a twenty-eight meter Nieuport.

As I told you this is the training for an *avion de chasse*, and if I am successful in it, I will eventually land at the front on a fifteen meter Nieuport or a Spad, which are the fastest machines the French have. The number of meters refers to the wing spread.

To-morrow I start work on the twenty-three meter double command.

Rankin Drew finished the Nieuport School by the first of December and on his way to Pau from Avord got a two days permission in Paris. He wrote me from camp a few days later.

December 10th.

Dear Mrs. Drew:—

If you ever come to France, pay a visit to Pau. It is simply beautiful.

I arrived in the town at midnight about three days ago. It was rather funny. I found a lot of different hotel busses at the station. Not knowing anything about the hotels of Pau, I got into the best looking bus and landed at the smartest hotel in the town.

It's frightful how my taste leads to the expensive. However, to return, I was shown to a very nice room and bath

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

and having left a call for six, passed heavily away and woke up in the morning to one of the most lovely pictures I have ever seen.

My room was above a terrace, on the edge of which a driveway ran, below, the ground sloped slowly to a winding river.

On its farther side, ridge after ridge, rose the Pyrennees, their slopes and peaks giving forth every conceivable color from dark red to snowy white.

With the first rays of the rising sun on the whole scene, I have never seen anything quite so exquisite.

I was terribly tempted to stay in the town until the afternoon instead of taking the early morning train out to the camp, but as I had already over-stayed my permission one day and expected to get jail for it, I decided that discretion was the better part of beauty and tearing myself away from the window, plunged into a terrifically intricate conversation with the porter, as to the possibility of ever getting my luggage from one station to the other.

I arrived at the camp without further incident of note, and after much persuasion and a certain semblance of dignity, talked the second in command out of giving me any jail at all. It was really not much of a feat.

Every pilot, both French and American, who goes from one school to another is at least a day late and nothing happens.

The French make great allowances for Aviators. They are looked upon as being not quite human; also they are the most sporty corps in the Army and are, therefore given a good many liberties.

It is funny to see their varied uniforms.

An Aviator is allowed to wear any uniform he likes, artillery, cavalry or infantry, the wings on his collar proclaim him a pilot and that is sufficient.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

In France a lieutenant in cavalry or a private in infantry can put in an application for aviation, and the one who has the most pull will be accepted. Therefore, *Eleve* pilots and pilots are composed of all ranks and types of the Army.

The *Chasse* pilots, on the whole, come of rather better stock than the bombardment or observation pilot.

As usual I have to say "some time ago" I received a letter from you written from your new apartment and dated October 14th.

I remember one outstanding feature of it.

An accusation that I was engaged, married or otherwise. And I know of no *greater danger!*

The idea appalls me. I malign the accusation! I ridicule the insinuation! I may have done many things before I left, even shameful things, but I did not get myself engaged.

If I carried any frivolous thoughts away with me, I have long since forgotten them and at all times my only true thoughts that carried love and regret were for just two people, father and yourself.

I must end rather abruptly as it is getting late and the bugle is blowing. Oh! We're very military here. Bugles, African troops and everything.

I hope father is better by now and do see that he takes care of himself. Incidentally, don't forget your own health. With much love to father—I have the honor to be,

Yours affectionately,

S. RANKIN DREW.

By December 16th Drew had finished the 110 H. P. Class in vols de groupe and went next to the Class of Acrobacy. He wrote interestingly of that phase of the training.

Dear Father:—

To-day I did all my acrobacy. Me, nervous onion!

The heaving on the sea during a gale, the spirited dash

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

of the scenic railway and the long, deep descent of the shoots are all child's play to it.

There was no work until the afternoon as the wind was too strong even for a Nieuport. Four Frenchmen and myself composed a *classe des acrobatics* and we all bumped solemnly out in a sombre tractor to the *acrobacy piste*.

As soon as I got there I was hurried into a thirteen meter machine which is even still smaller and still faster than the other Nieuports.

I was then carefully strapped in; not only with the regulation strap which passes over the thighs, but with a broad belt that came across my chest, giving me the feeling that I was suddenly gripped in a straight-jacket.

I then made two flights to become accustomed to the machine, and dismounting, was solemnly led into the hangar and told just how to do a *vrille*, and, above all, how to get out of it.

Having been given instructions, I practiced them in a dummy machine on the ground.

I was then put back in the thirteen meter, thoroughly secured in my straight-jacket and sent off to do my worst.

I did it! At the height of 4500 feet I stopped climbing, according to instructions, and having gone over in my mind what I was to do, I took a long breath and started in.

I cut the motor, pulled back the control so that the machine stood up on its tail until it quivered with loss of speed, and then pushed all the controls way over to one side. The result was appalling in its lightning response.

The machine heaved up in the air, so did my stomach. Then, flapped over on its side, so did my stomach, dived headlong towards the ground and spun round about three spins a second. By this time there was no stomach left at all.

Well, I had been told to come down three hundred feet

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

in this manner, that is from 4500 to 4200 feet, and then stop the *vrille* by putting the controls in the middle.

I thought I would do a little better than that and come down eight hundred feet before I stopped the *vrille*.

I carried out my determination and at about 3600 feet put everything in the middle. As a matter of fact the machine stopped turning but my head didn't and I thought it was still in a *vrille*.

Well, I then pushed the control forward so far that I came down five hundred feet in a nose-dive and half on my back.

Then I pulled it back so far that I shot up in the air and slipping off on a wing went into another *vrille*. All the time my head was spinning around like the fly-wheel in an automobile.

However, by this time it began to slow down a little, and I realized that the machine was no longer turning, and after pushing the controls in every direction, finally got the machine under control nine hundred feet from the ground.

I had dropped 3600 feet in less than half a minute.

Well, I couldn't understand what I had done that had been wrong. I had done exactly what I had been told to do and yet I thought that I had not stopped the *vrille* when I had wanted to.

You see, I didn't realize then that it had been my head that had continued to spin and not the machine. Anyhow, I decided to do another one before I landed and throwing on my motor went up and did another one. This time it was better.

After that I did several acrobatic manoeuvres and when I came down was given hell by the monitor for my long *vrilles* and on the charge that I might have killed myself.

I don't know yet whether I got good notes on my acrobatics.



About the time of Drew's graduation from Cutler School



As the "Private Secretary," presented by the Cutler Comedy Club

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

Will know, I think, by the time I write you next.

Please give my deepest respects to Mrs. Drew and her sister.

Father, please take care of yourself. The Liberty Loan is a wonderful thing, but if it's a poor investment on your health, I'd let Smith walk a little. With loads and loads of love, I am,

Your loving son,
S. RANKIN DREW.

P. S. If you see Frank Lawrence please remember me to him.

December 18th.

His Christmas Letter

Pau, le 23 Decembre, 1917.

Dear Mrs. Drew:—

It is to laugh! I remember that in June and the early part of May I was dashing around trying to get into anything that was intensely military, especially anything that would get me to the front amid the shells, the heroism, the rats, the horrors and the glory of war.

Oh! I most certainly was a splendid fellow! I would not waste time with a lot of stupid training or be knocked about and delayed in camps by our shuffling Government! No! I would cross the sea to a country full of action, where I would see service with a certainty bordering on imminence. I would go "over there" where I could find something "real" and immediate to do.

And here I am! Seven months away from home, six months in training, and I now find that I am going to still another school.

To explain from the beginning: having gone through the Coney Island thrills of aviation, I am now in the last class of this school called *Vol de Combat*. In this, one chases madly about the air after a parachute, pretending that one

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

has a machine gun and that the parachute is a Boche to be shot down if caught in the line of sight. Also one goes off on a patrol and is attacked by an enemy patrol and there is a general mix-up and everybody comes home and says "you're dead" to everybody else.

Now most fellows go to the front directly from this class. That is, to a sort of * * *

* * * *Here he stopped writing as he had a habit of doing to continue two days later.*

When I wrote the above I was still in Pau. Now, I am in Paris.

I know my letters are always frightfully disconnected but the break in this one was caused by an unforeseen occasion.

It is Christmas! How odd the name of the sacred day sounds to me.

It seems impossible to associate it with the present; a word so intimately connected with past happiness, warmth, and cheer. Yuletide! Christmas!

Over here they call it *Noel*.

The name rings strangely on the ear, as do the surroundings and mode of life jarr on the senses. No bustle of preparation, no happy secrets, so carefully sworn to and so poorly kept. No cheery cries in the morning; no merry elation tempered by heartfelt thanksgiving as the words pass from heart to heart "Merry Xmas."

Still—"I am thinking of you to-day because it is Christmas."

For, though my mind may be confused by new problems, by past regrets, by speculation on the future, my heart is back with you and father carrying only love, cheer and dear remembrances.

I had almost forgotten its most potent message, gratitude

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

for the past, the present, and a sublime confidence in whatever the future may hold for us and for all dear to us. But—really, if you boil all this blind groping for definition down to the real thing, it's "Merry Xmas, Mrs. Drew. Many of 'em."

As I said, I am in Paris. I am on my way to a machine gun school.

When I started this letter in Pau, I didn't know that I would have a chance to come to Paris, expecting to remain at Pau until the 27th.

The letter was rudely broken off by one of the fellows rushing madly into the barracks with the news that we were free to go where we liked from the morning of the 24th to the morning of the 27th. After that pandemonium, of course, all but one of us decided to go to Paris. I don't for the life of me see why, except that it seems to be the first and the last word in France.

Anyhow, five wild young men boarded the train for Paris. The next day and Christmas Eve were spent in a second class compartment with two Canadian Tommies and celebrated with a bottle of champagne, two bottles of red ink and a pint of cognac, the entire contribution of the assembled gathering.

I expect to be at the machine gun school for about two weeks, then I will go to a detention camp where all pilots are sent until they are assigned to their Escadrilles. The period of waiting there is generally two weeks, so this time next month I ought to be at the front.

It is great luck to be sent to the machine gun school as most fellows are sent direct from Pau to the detention camp and then straight to the front.

I say "great luck" because the practice one gets with a machine gun at Avord and Pau is little or nothing. As it is I have never fired a machine gun off in the air, though

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

I have fired a hundred shots on the ground. I know a good deal about the mechanism of one but that is all.

I must say *au revoir* for the present. With all good wishes for a Merry Xmas.

My respects and love to you and father, I am,

Yours affectionately,

December 25th, 1917.

S. RANKIN DREW.

From Pau Drew went to Cazaux, the machine gun school, where he stayed until the 20th of January. He left Cazaux carrying with him an order to present himself at the French Recruitment Bureau to receive his release from the French Army. His Father had advised him to stay with the French drawing from him the following comment:

"I am afraid your advice has come too late. If I only could have received it earlier! I believe that I can still put in a demand to stay in the French Army counteracting the one I put in for release. I am not sure and it is certainly not consistent, although I don't think it would reflect on my honor. I was never an actor who aspired to play Hamlet but I've been doing it with a vengeance for the past four months. 'To be or not to be'—To join or not to join!"

After much effort he finally got back into the French Army and left Paris for a concentration camp there to await orders to the front. It was a long wait—two months and the following terse excerpts tell their own story:

Dear, dear Father:—

It is simply wonderful to sit down and talk to you—I say "talk to you" because you are so much in my mind that when I write you I feel as though I was before you, making my weekly confession. Oh, father, I miss you terribly, horribly. I'm afraid I have the *cafards* (as the French say), to-night.

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

But, really this is an impossible place and you must excuse me.

I am one step nearer the front, but still I am not really at it.

I am still waiting to be assigned to an Escadrille, and heaven knows how long I will have to wait. It's really maddening. I have never done more to get to a place in my life, and I have never found one so hard to reach.

It now seems certain that I won't leave here for two or three weeks. May be more, Oh! I never saw anything like it.

We fly here every day to keep our hands in practice and vary the monotony by doing acrobacy every now and then. It's horrible. I've never been so despondent in my life.

I now look forward to the front as a beautiful haven of contentment.

February 25th!

I am still at this concentration camp waiting to be assigned to an Escadrille. God knows, when I will get out of it.

There are hundreds of pilots here and the list ahead of me is enormous. The only hope I see ahead of me is a big offensive which would make gaps in the Escadrille's ranks that would call for new pilots. That's an awful thing to wish for but I slowly but surely am going crazy here.

I feel like such a slacker. I have been over eight months in the schools and still I don't know when I am going to get to the front. I am getting a good deal of flying now, which of course only does me good. You can't get too much flying, but still when you have been striving as long as I have to attain a definite object the work here can't help but be monotonous and boring.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

March 4th!

Well, dear father, your ne'er-do-well son is still "not yet at the front." I think that is going to be my slogan for the rest of the war.

I have been shifted around a good deal, flown various types of machines, had more machine gun training, but I am still at the big concentration camp for pilots, W-A-I-T-I-N-G.

The only thing that I have succeeded in doing is to save money. However, that seems to be quite an accomplishment and I think of it as a sop for my inaction.

An aviator's training and life appeals to me like the formation and career of a butterfly. The idea of flying is borne in his mind like an egg that is laid. Then as the idea hatches and he takes up his training, he crawls around for endless days like a blind worm amidst the apparent mysteries of aviation.

At length, he takes the form of what some day he will be, but is left to himself in suspense like a chrysalis.

One day he breaks from his confines and blooms forth in all his development and glory.

He flits around a most uncertain and precarious world for a short time, much too short for the length of time it has taken him to prepare for it and abruptly passes out of it.

I don't mean to liken myself to the bounding butterfly, neither to the graceful gazelle, but I do feel thoroughly chrysalized into an ambitionless nothingness which suggested the comparison.

March 21st!

They tell me I am going to the front to-morrow, but I don't believe anything now until it happens.

My three best friends over here have all gone, two of them long since. Tommy Hitchcock is a prisoner in Germany after having brought down two Boche.

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

Upton Sullivan, who has also been at the front for two months, is now a sergeant and Don. Stone left here last week to join an Escadrille. Stone and I asked to go out together, but of course our plans didn't pan out.

They never do in the Army.

March 25th found him there!

Well, here I am at the front. I have been assigned to a very good Escadrille in a very good Group.

It is a Spad Escadrille, that is, only Spad aeroplanes are used. The Spad is the fastest *chasse* plane the French have.

So far I have been very lucky, but whether I will stay in this Escadrille is another matter.

They already have more men than they need.

That is one reason why I may be sent back to the depot. Another is that I will have to make good, naturally, before I will be accepted into the fold.

Things began to pick up a bit after that as his letter of April 11th to me will evidence.

Our Escadrille was scheduled to make a at-the-crack-of-dawn patrol, so we all tumbled out of bed and stumbled around in the dawning for clothes, and I lost my ring, which woke me up thoroughly, and found it again, and after a hasty toilette, one might say cold water thrown about one's head without any particular object, we all dashed out to the field to find the ceiling only two hundred metres high. Of course no patrol.

This is what it has been for the last three days: rain, fog and low lying clouds.

The day after I wrote my last letter to father, it was dated the fourth, I had some rather funny and very interesting experiences.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

I went out on my second patrol over the lines. Of course, being a green pilot I knew nothing about the *secteur*, although I had been up and down the lines and about five kilometers, something like three miles, into enemy country on my first patrol.

For, on one's first patrol one does not get much chance to do anything except follow the leader, which strange as it may seem in the air developes into a game of hide and seek for a young pilot who is not accustomed to the wiles and turnings of five or six old ones in extremely fast machines.

Well, anyhow, we started gaily out on this second patrol of mine and right from the jump I began to have trouble with my motor. We crossed the lines, I knew that because I could see the bursting of the shells on the ground.

One can't find trenches in this *secteur* to mark a true course of the lines. There are no trenches, yet.

To return, I began to have even more trouble with my motor and my machine began to bounce all over the air as I took my hands off the controls to fiddle with the many attachments with which a Spad is furnished. All the time we were heading due north-east into German territory.

Finally the pressure of the motor dropped to zero and I realized that the motor pump which pumps gasoline into the carburetor had broken. Consequently no gasoline.

Well, among the many levers, there seemed to me a thousand at that moment, I found one that turns on a connection from a reserve tank to the carburetor and that feeds enough gasoline to keep the engine going for ten minutes.

I turned that lever on, swung the machine around and beat it for home.

I didn't know where I was but I knew that the general course to take was West. Go West, young man! And, I went, with the propeller turning two thousand revolutions a minute, as fast as it would go, and the machine travelling



In "The Yellow Dragon," a sketch Drew played in Vaudeville



SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

at about 130 kilometers, 90 miles per hour. I went West until it made me nervous and then I turned towards the sun.

I knew our field was somewhere in the direction of the sun. At the end of ten minutes my motor began to just naturally die and I landed in a nice big green field laying beside a main road.

There was a long line of tractors and ambulances passing. I was pretty sure that I had landed in France but I was awfully glad when I could make out French troops in those tractors.

I found out on inquiry that I was some thirteen miles from the lines, and must have come back in a pretty direct course for our aviation field which was five miles further on.

I ought explain that all aviation fields are some twelve to twenty miles behind the lines.

I hailed one of the passing tractors and went to the nearest town.

It was full of troops *en repose* just arrived from the trenches after ten days of continuous fighting. You can't imagine such a mess.

Trucks everywhere, rumbling through the narrow streets. Ambulances querulously tooting to be allowed to pass. Staff cars nosing and shoving their way through the congestion.

The sidewalks crowded with French and here and there British soldiers; the townspeople standing timidly in their doorways listening to the brusque commands of the military gendarmes, and hedged into alleyways; gathered in the centre of the squares, groups of refugees, their worldly belongings, sometimes very numerous, sometimes piteously few, piled on every kind of odd vehicle that has ever been invented.

Into the midst of this I was deposited by the tractor and after two hours of inquiring, nobody seemed to know any-

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

thing and cared less, everybody having come into the town for rest and not to be bothered by a fool aviator *en panne*.

I finally arrived at the headquarters staff of the Army Corps. There I was taken under the wing of a lieutenant whose duty it was to occupy himself with aviation in connection with the Fourth Army.

From then on I was treated royally. You can't beat the French for hospitality and courtesy.

I ate dinner with the staff and an old captain told me some very interesting stories of the battle, which I can't repeat. He pressed upon me the offer of a car to take me back to my camp after I had left a guard of soldiers over my *avion*, as the town was packed and there was no place to sleep.

At eleven o'clock the car, a limousine, was at the door and I piled my four disgruntled *poilus* into it and we started out to find the *avion*.

Well, the night was pitch black, the road from the town I was at to the next one was four miles long.

It was lined on either side with open fields and my machine was in one of these fields, a thousand yards from the road.

It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. I kept it up until one o'clock then I called it off.

It must have been very funny. We would dash along the road until I thought I saw a land mark, then the car would stop and I would scramble off and out into the darkness while strange rumblings would issue from the pent-up *poilus* inside the limousine.

I slept in the car that night, and five o'clock the next morning the search was resumed with immediate success.

April 13th

I had just finished the sentence above, that was two days

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

ago, when somebody rushed into the tent and said that the Escadrille had just received an emergency call.

Fifteen minutes later nine of our machines took the air, myself included. This was my fourth patrol.

Of the former three, two had been very peaceful and one had ended in the *panne* that I have just told you about.

The fourth one was a hum-dinger. It was a very bad day. Clouds in layers and mist all the way up from half a mile to three miles. I don't know what it was like farther up as we didn't go any higher. I got my first taste of being under fire.

The anti-aircraft guns took quite a few pots at the end of the patrol and I was among the three that composed the rear-guard. We circled over the lines for two hours nearly. Then, we got into a fight with seven Boche, that is the advance guard, or first group did, and we of the rear-guard came dashing up and everybody got mixed up with everybody else and principally with the clouds and by the time we got out of them nobody knew where we were and four of us that were together dashed off looking for home, and went half way to the sea before we landed for want of gasoline.

We were seventy kilometers from our base and couldn't get gasoline until this morning when we flew back.

I think I have talked enough about myself.

I would give almost anything to take one of those dear little flying machines and be able to float over to New York in it!

By George, I should like to be there, if only for twenty-four hours, and be home once more with you and father. Eat a real dinner and afterwards hear the click of your typewriter and father's explosive plots for eight or maybe ten new scripts. This business of going "out into the world" and "living life" may give one lots to bore one's grandchildren with but doesn't have the charms that home

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

and family hold out to the young man who "must learn by experience."

If ever I have a son, my first care will be to instill into his mind the idiocy of those set phrases, "Go out into the World," "Seeing life," "He—— of a good time," "Learn by Experience." Yes, "that is the first instrument he shall ever learn to play."

However, as Kipling says, "That's all shoved behind me long ago and far away," and the only thing I can do is to send my astral spirit which I am sure is constantly haunting your pretty new home.

With my best wishes to your sister and my love to father, I have the honor to be,

Yours affectionately,

S. RANKIN DREW.

It was in March of 1918 that Richard Walton Tully produced the play "Keep Her Smiling" which brought my late husband back to the stage after a successful sojourn of five years in Motion Pictures.

April 18th.

Dear Father:—

I want to congratulate you a thousand, thousand times on your success. Mrs. Drew's success and the success of the play. I was simply wild with delight when I got your cable and then when Mrs. Drew's letter came I can't tell you how happy I was. It's really great. Father, to think of your going back and making a knockout the first crack out of the box. Of course, I didn't doubt for a moment that you would, but then "the great unwashed" is peculiar and it's very nice to have their confirmation on your own judgment. As I was reading the notices I reminded myself very much of you. I found tears floating around my globules with just the sheer joy of your success.

Oh, father, I wish I could slip into the theatre one night

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

to hear your reception, your speech and the laughs and applause of the audience.

It must be wonderful for you, father, and for Mrs. Drew, too.

It has made me happier than anything else could while I am over here.

But I must confess that I will be nearly as happy if I can get a Boche. As much for your sake as for mine and above all because I want to be worthy of your belief in me and your pride.

So far, I have done nothing that the merest fool could not have done, but if I can make my mark I will feel that I have, at least, confirmed your conviction in my ability "to come across."

We have had non-flying weather for the last five days, ever since I wrote Mrs. Drew my last letter. Consequently, I have no more adventures to relate, but I have had a very great stroke of luck.

The captain of the Escadrille has given me a brand new machine. Before, I was driving his old one. It was a two hundred and twenty horse-power Spad.

These machines carry two machine guns on the hood of the engine. They go in horizontal line of flight at about 130 miles an hour and climb faster than the 180 H.P. Spad, but they are a fraction slower to manoeuvre and their engines are a great deal more delicate and uncertain. Also the one I had had worked eighty hours over the lines and that is about thirty hours too much, both for the best results for the plane itself and for the motor.

Now I have a hundred and eighty horse-power Spad with only one machine gun, but my, what a difference in the air.

I haven't had it out of the lines yet but I've had it up a few times and it certainly is a beauty.

The captain has been perfectly charming to me. I think he rather likes Americans.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

There is another one in the Escadrille, Harold Saxon, who went to school with me at Avord. He's been at the front for about two months now and has just been made a sergeant. He hasn't got a Boche yet, but has had about thirty hours over the lines, I should say forty, and after forty hours one is generally recommended for a sergeancy.

I might explain that I am in what is officially called a *Groupe de Combat*.

These groups are composed of four Escadrilles and a "park" for repairing badly damaged machines, supplying new parts and entirely new machines. The only machine used in these groups is a Spad plane, single seater. Each Escadrille is made up of fifteen pilots including its commander, sometimes a captain, sometimes a lieutenant.

Each pilot has two mechanics for his machine and there is a head mechanic, generally a sergeant, who overlooks all the work.

A *Groupe de Combat* is not definitely assigned to any one Army Corps or Army, but is shifted from one part of the front to another as occasion demands. Among the pilots of the Group are five Americans, one of them my friend Stone, whom I spoke of in a former letter.

All the Frenchmen in my Escadrille, and indeed in the Group are charming. The life is delightful; the hours easy. We never are up more than four hours a day and very seldom more than two.

Sometimes we have a patrol at five in the morning, but other days not until noon. As chocolate and toast is served to you in bed at eight-thirty you don't have to get up until it is time to fly or to eat if you are particularly tired—or lazy.

I have only one complaint to make and that is that we don't fly enough.

All the other Escadrilles send out three or four pilots in a patrol on what is called *chasse libre*, free hunting, and they

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

go poking around the sky looking for trouble, but our captain will only let us go out on big patrols which we must not leave from start to finish unless we are having trouble with our motors.

These patrols are composed of eight to twelve machines. Of course, if there is any fighting to be done our captain is the first to lead us into it. He brought down a German in the fight I told Mrs. Drew about.

But to return, the Boche give a wide berth to a big patrol even if they are in fairly strong numbers themselves, so our Escadrille has had less combats during the time we have been here than any of the others.

Also the other Escadrilles allow volunteer patrols of three men each. Therefore their machines are more often over the lines than ours. The cause of our captain's conservation is the loss of an ace who was brought down during a volunteer patrol not long before I joined the Escadrille.

He was a wonderful pilot and according to all accounts a very lovable fellow, and the captain felt his loss both as commander and friend. Since then the captain has put the lid on taking chances. He only allows patrols to go out of not less than six and no one must leave the patrol to go hunting on their own account.

Stone, in another Escadrille, who has only been out a week longer than I have, has had thirty hours over the lines.

I have had five. However, I don't mean that I am dissatisfied. Far from it. It's just that I should like to do more work.

Dear father, I can't write any more now. God bless you, and give you worlds and worlds of success as I know, no one better, except Mrs. Drew, than you, are worthy of it. I hope to heaven I will be worthy of you in another line of work and I think as far as trying is concerned that I will be.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

However, you have got results and that's what I want to get.

Please give my deepest respects to Mrs. Drew. With loads and loads of love, I am

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P.S.—I cut off my moustache a couple of weeks ago and at first it quite awed me, I look so like you. It's funny the change, it makes in me. I look like a kid.

The moustache has been getting on my nerves for some time. I had no real reason to wear it. Before it was part of my business, so I decided to erase it and I find its loss a great comfort.

His First NEAR Battle

Nothing worthy of mention has happened since I wrote last. More bad weather, so I have only been out on one patrol.

Three of us got into a large argument after that patrol. The whole thing was rather comic. To explain, some days ago the captain of our Escadrille was promoted to a commandant (major) and appointed a commander of another group. In turn it was announced that a lieutenant would arrive in two days to take charge of our Escadrille. Well, the captain, having many things to attend to in preparation for his departure, handed over the management of the Escadrille to one of our sous-lieutenants.

The next day, our temporary commander, the sous-lieutenant, took three of us out on a patrol: Saxon, an American, a Frenchman and myself.

Well we flew up and down the lines doing nothing, sticking under the clouds which hung in a thick canopy at about twenty-five hundred feet. Suddenly in an open space, we saw a biplane flying towards our lines.

The lieutenant made no effort to go up and see if it was a Boche, so Saxon and I broke patrol, an offense strictly



Drew referred in his letters to his "tame lamona" picture



Without the mustache—Taken a few days before Drew's death

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

defendu, and followed by the other Frenchman, climbed through an opening in the clouds and chasing the biplane, found out that it was French.

In the meantime, the lieutenant had been unable to get up through the clouds, so Saxon taking the lead, we started out on our own patrol.

We did our best to find some unwary Boche, going fifteen miles into their lines, but saw nothing until four Boche suddenly came shooting down on us out of the mist.

Taken at a complete disadvantage, we were too far in enemy territory to give battle, as in an unequal combat like that, one of us was sure to get a bullet in him or in his machine, and would never have been able to land on French soil.

Also the side on top, presupposing that it is composed of good pilots, is practically sure of a decisive victory. Anyhow, to make a very lengthy story short, the three of us fled.

When we got back to camp there was Hail Columbia.

The lieutenant was waiting for us and as soon as we landed, a frightful, discordant melee of words sounded on the air.

The lieutenant spoke his full mind, which I should say was rather captious, and Saxon and I spluttered out French with "ye know what I mean," and "can't you see" sprinkled about with bad grammar, and bad language.

The mechanics stood around and grinned and the old pilots shook their heads and walked away.

At tea, things were a bit offish but dinner was jovial and the whole affair was dismissed by the captain as imprudent.

On May Second, Drew saw action—His first real chance at a Boche!

To-day is the 2nd of May and the weather continued

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

bad until this morning. At five o'clock this afternoon the captain and five of us went out on patrol.

We floated along in a beautiful clear sky about three miles and a quarter up, the highest I've ever gone, and I thought I was going to have the same uneventful trip as I had had so many times before.

Suddenly from my position at the back of the patrol, I saw the captain peek down on a biplane machine.

None of the other machines followed him, we were just making a turn and it happened that nobody saw his dive except me. I was supposed to follow the man immediately ahead of me, but I wanted to see what was going on so I broke formation and went shooting down after the captain.

He swerved off some distance from the biplane which confused me for a moment as I thought perhaps he had only dived down to take a look at the passing machine. However, I continued my descent on it and got close enough to see the gunner standing up in the back seat and distinguish the black crosses on the wings.

I knew then that I was going to have my first real shot at a Boche.

Well, I swerved away and kept on diving. One is not supposed to attack a biplane from above and behind as the gunner has a direct bead on you which is liable to be unhealthy.

To make a long story short, I came up behind but under him and began firing. It was pot shooting as I was almost a thousand yards behind him. Anyhow, the pilot swerved his machine uncovering me to his gunner. I dived and swung around under his tail again. By this time I had gained on him and was not more than six hundred yards behind.

Well I pulled the machine off in a climbing position until she was at over an angle of forty-five degrees and just as I got a bead on him the damn motor stopped and I flopped

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW

off on a wing. Of course, he pulled away from me while I caught my motor.

I made the same manoeuver again and the same thing happened. Of course, I was losing distance all the time. I made one more effort and when the motor stopped the third time, I was so mad that I swung away.

Then, I found two machines of our patrol following me, trying to catch up. I joined them and we went home and dot's the story. Nevertheless I'll get one soon!

Nevertheless I'll get one soon! It was that challenge to himself that made him overzealous. His last letter home was to his father and dated May 12th—just six days before his death.

May 12th, 1918.

Dear Father:—

I went out on a patrol yesterday and was well shaken up by anti-aircraft shells, aside from beating it with the others in the patrol from about twenty Boche who came out of the sun at us just when our formation had been badly shattered by the afore-mentioned shells.

I think that to see a patrol bombarded by anti-aircraft is rather comic. One sees say five machines floating majestically along in a perfect V formation.

They look so serene and self-assured.

Then a black puff appears in the middle of the group but usually several hundred feet above, followed by a hollow report which reminds one of a dozen giant fire crackers going off under a bucket.

One of the machines swerves like a bird ruffling its wings and then settles back into its place in the formation. Another black pull follows. Then several in quick succession.

Then there is a lull while the patrol flies majestically on, apparently unheeding the warning of the range-finders.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

Suddenly, the machines of the flanks of the formation are surrounded with black puffs and they remind you of a ball gyrating on the spray of a fountain. Indeed they seem to have gone totally crazy.

They go twisting and turning, diving and climbing in an effort to avoid the shells and to change the range of the guns below. At the end of three or four minutes, the patrol is dotted all over the sky, its dignity completely wrecked by the ridiculous antics of its units.

To-day it is raining. We are in the valley of the Somme and they tell me that the weather is always uncertain no matter what the time of the year. How cheerful!

There is really nothing else to tell you, except that I attended a very picturesque funeral of an "ace" of our group.

He was killed the other day after bringing down his eighteenth machine. He was a really lovely fellow. He was only twenty-two, was a lieutenant, which corresponds to our first lieutenant, commander of the crack Escadrille of the group, was beloved by everybody, a gentleman and a true sportsman. Incidentally, he spoke English very well.

It was quite startling to see the deep impression and sincere sorrow of all when his patrol returned without him. He fell in the French lines, so his body was brought back to camp where it was placed in a good sized tent, especially set up for the purpose.

For twenty-four hours the tent was constantly guarded by two soldiers and the body watched over by two pilots. Chaput, the "ace" that I am speaking of, was given a funeral worthy of his deeds and indeed a general could not have asked for much better.

A company of infantry marched before the bier, while those who followed it were Fonch and Nungesser, the two greatest French "aces," the commanders of several groups,

SIDNEY RANKIN DREW



old well known pilots, young pilots who had just butted into "acedom" or were on the verge of it, and the small fry like myself.

In regard to the service and the ceremony, it was Catholic and I don't think I am capable of describing it. Besides, one gets terribly callous and loses one's sense of imagination or doesn't allow it to develop. I don't know which.

Therefore, any description I would attempt to give you would be very flat and colorless.

Well, dear father, good-night and God bless you. With my deepest affection to Mrs. Drew and loads and loads of love to yourself, I am,

Your loving son,

S. RANKIN DREW.

P.S.—A large fat pat for Dock-o-dee.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF

The story of Rankin Drew's last flight was detailed to me by a member of his Esquadrielle, Harold Saxon, who was with him at the time and one of his close friends.

On May 19th, shortly after the noonday meal, Drew's squadron was scheduled for a patrol. The squadron was divided into two formations—one above the other—acting as protection for one another. Drew was in the lower formation stationed near the *chef de patrouille*. The patrol was sailing along about 15 kilometers in German territory keenly eyeing a Boche patrol under them made up of five albatross combat machines.

When the Boche machines came nearer and were directly beneath Drew's patrol, his zeal got the best of him.

In an instant he was seen to break away diving directly into the midst of the Boche, directing fire from both machine guns at one of the five. Then in another moment his plane was seen to fall—diving until it crashed into the ground being followed by a victim, undoubtedly hit by that first well-directed gun-fire.

As Drew went after his victim he was easy target for at least two of the other four in the German patrol and was either struck unconscious or killed outright by their fire.

This took but a few moments and in the general mix-up that followed, Drew's squadron avenged his death. Three Boche paid the toll.

Sidney Rankin Drew fell near the little town of Arvilliers north-east of Montdidier.

The Germans placed a bleak but significant monument over his grave. A wooden cross constructed from the struts of his wrecked aeroplane.

Later his body was removed to Montdidier, France, where it now rests.



*Cross erected over grave
of S. Rankin Drew by
German adversaries and
brought to the United
States by Lt. Col. Hart-
man L. Butler, C.A.C.,
U. S. Army*



COM. WELLS HAWKS

MRS. SIDNEY DREW

ARTHUR RANKIN

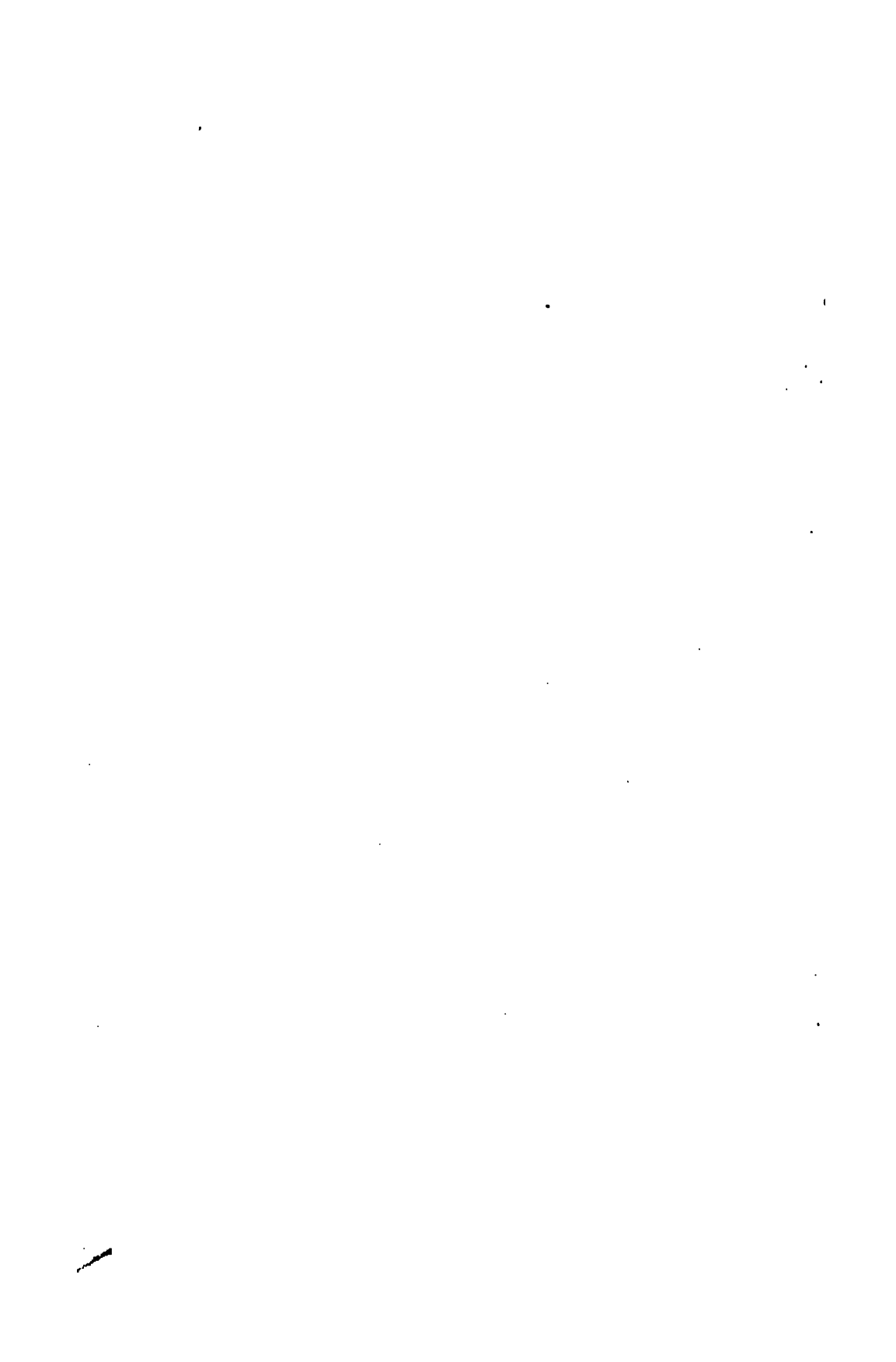
The Presentation of the Cross to the S. Rankin Drew Post of the American Legion

Afterglow

*All these you loved and loved so well—
Blue sky with clouds of whiteness rolling after
The caress of winds that gently blow,
Birds that sing and children's laughter,
Rosy dawn and afterglow;*

*Night with its dress of starry spangles,
Moon that sets lovers' hearts athrill,
A silvery river that twists and tangles,
And dancing poplars never still—
All these I love because you loved them well.*

ARTHUR RANKIN



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